



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Second Round of Presidential Elections held March 5 in Armenia

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Douglas A. Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 13, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, the United States shares the concerns over the conduct of the March 5 presidential runoff election in Armenia expressed by the joint observer mission of ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and so ably reiterated here by the Greek Ambassador on behalf of the European Union.

We agree with the ODIHR/PACE mission's initial conclusions and are deeply disappointed by the electoral irregularities that have been reported. The presence of Armenian domestic observers in many polling stations was positive. Still, a number of problems were identified, among them ballot box stuffing, "carousel" voting at multiple polling stations, inappropriate military voting, the intimidation, absence or expulsion of opposition proxies, and apparent intimidation of some international observers. The period between the two election rounds also was marred by a number of shortcomings, including detentions without due process and lack of accountability for irregularities in the first round.

Armenia's leadership missed an important opportunity last week to advance democratization and improve its standing in the world community by holding a democratic, credible election. We urge the government in Yerevan to recommit itself to building a democratic Armenia and restoring public confidence. A good beginning would be the conduct of a full, transparent and impartial investigation of election irregularities, accountability for those responsible, and revision of the electoral law to enhance transparency, well in advance of the May parliamentary election. We call on the opposition to pursue its legitimate election grievances through peaceful and legal processes. We hope that all political elements in Armenia will avoid resorting to post election violence and will adhere to the Armenian constitution.

Thank you.